

**Statement for the Record of**

**JAVED ALI**

**Senior Intelligence Officer  
Office of Intelligence and Analysis  
Department of Homeland Security**

**“RADICALIZATION”**

**U.S. House of Representatives  
Homeland Security Committee  
Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing, and Terrorism Risk  
Assessment**

**20 September 2006**

## INTRODUCTION

Chairman, Ranking Minority Member Thompson, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share perspectives on an important national security topic—*radicalization in the United States*. Since 2004, a spate of terrorist activities in Western Europe carried out or supported by radicalized “homegrown” Sunni extremists, including the Madrid and London attacks, focused national attention on the overseas phenomenon. More recent developments in the United States and Canada, including the disrupted California prison-based Jam-iyyat ul-Islam As-Saheeh (JIS) cell and the “Toronto 17”-- have focused attention on the phenomenon in North America.

While traditional counterterrorism analysis emphasizes the who, what, where, and when of potential terrorist threats, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Intelligence and Analysis (OI&A) has convened a radicalization study which seeks to develop a broader understanding of *why and how* radicalizing influences take root and spread in the United States. By identifying critical factors at the “front end” of the radicalization process, we hope to assist policymakers, intelligence officers, and law enforcement officials in their efforts to develop tools, practices, and methods which may prevent radical beliefs from “crossing the line” towards actual violence. This OI&A project is part of a broader DHS approach in addressing the issue of radicalization, and will inform the Department-wide effort to understand and mitigate the phenomenon.

## CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES

During the course of our study, we have found that no universal definition of radicalization exists in the intelligence or the academic/social science communities. As a result, our study has developed a “working” definition whereby radicalization entails “*the process of adopting an extremist belief system, including the willingness to use, support, or facilitate violence, as a method to effect societal change.*” This definition separates radicalization from terrorism, and focuses more on an understanding of behavior and how, why, and where that behavior develops over time. We are attempting to identify

and examine radicalization “nodes”—which we define as conduits that facilitate or support a person or group through the radicalization process. Nodes may be physical institutions, virtual communities, charismatic individuals, written or recorded material, or even shared experiences.

## **METHODOLOGY**

We are conducting our study in a phased approach, focusing on examining radicalization dynamics in key geographic regions throughout the country. Our first phase focused on assessments in California and the New York/New Jersey area, while our second phase focuses on the Midwest and National Capital Region. We hope to conduct other regional or state assessments in future phases, with the goal that these will provide the building blocks for a broader national assessment.

Each regional assessment begins with our attempts to frame an intelligence picture particular to that State or region by first examining national-level intelligence reporting and open-source information. After this research is conducted, we then take those findings and share them during face-to-face meetings with Federal, State, and local law enforcement, intelligence, and homeland security professionals. As of September 2006, we have held meetings with representatives from New York City, Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Sacramento, Chicago, Columbus, Ohio, and Springfield, Illinois, and will soon meet with officials in Virginia, Maryland, Washington DC, and Texas. We have also found a number of foreign governments keenly interested in the radicalization issue, and our meetings with them have helped strengthen perspectives on radicalization.

## **KEY FINDINGS**

Thus far we have found that relationships between radicalization nodes and radical actor/groups vary across ideological and ethno-religious spectrums, different geographic regions, and socio-economic conditions. Further, we have found many diverse “pathways” to radicalization in the United States based on an examination of the nodes I described earlier. We have found that nodes may be physical institutions, virtual communities, charismatic individuals, written or recorded material, or even shared

experiences. Further, we are finding that radicalization is not a “one- way street,” and that individuals and groups can radicalize or “de-radicalize” based on a variety of factors.

## **CONCLUSION**

Our work on radicalization is preliminary and by no means complete. Continued dialogue and relationship-building with Federal, State, local, and even foreign, partners is a critical aspect of this work, in order to gain the most accurate and nuanced intelligence perspectives on radicalization activities both in the United States and abroad.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for giving me the opportunity to speak with you and the members of the Committee. I welcome your questions.